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ABSTRACT

Scores on the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), the Diagnostic Achievement Battery (DAB-2) and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-III), were compared for 58 students assessed for placement in exceptional education. Primary questions concerned (a) the relationships among WIAT, DAB-2, and WISC-III scores, (b) similarities and differences between the WIAT and the DAB-2 scores, and (c) comparison of all scores by race and gender. Comparisons of WISC-III full scale IQs and respective WIAT and DAB-2 Total Achievement Scores fell in the predicted range. Mean comparisons of similar scales on the WIAT and DAB-2 indicated that all WIAT scales yielded higher scores, and that the WIAT Total Achievement score was significantly higher than its DAB-2 counterpart. Mean comparisons of WISC-III IQs, WIAT, and DAB-2 scores, respectively, by race and gender found no significant differences on the WISC-III, two differences by gender on the WIAT, and one difference by race on the DAB-2. These results question the comparability of the WIAT and the DAB-2 and suggest that for these groups, race and gender were relatively unimportant in classifying exceptional students. Even though no significant differences were obtained between racial groups, African-American students were portrayed as being more at risk for academic failure. It is important then, that school psychologists be sensitive to the characteristics of local populations and avoid stereotypical preconceptions regarding expected performance on achievement and ability measures. (Contains 13 references and 4 tables.) (GCP)

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Running head: COMPARISON OF WIAT, DAB-2, AND WISC-III SCORES

Comparison of WIAT, DAB-2, and WISC-III Scores Of Students Assessed for Exceptional Class Placement

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Summary

Scores on the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), the Diagnostic Achievement Battery (DAB-2) and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-III), were compared for 58 students assessed for placement in exceptional education. Primary questions concerned (a) the relationships among WIAT, DAB-2, and WISC-III scores, (b) similarities and differences between the WIAT and the DAB-2 scores, and (c) comparison of all scores by race and gender. Data were analyzed using t-tests for correlated data and Pearson r correlations. Comparisons of WISC-III FSIQs and respective WIAT and DAB-2 Total Achievement scores fell in the predicted range, yielding Pearson values of .51 and .68, respectively. Further, just 11 of 100 correlations among WIAT and DAB-2 scales were significant. Mean comparisons of similar scales on the WIAT and DAB-2 indicated that all WIAT scales yielded higher scores, and the WIAT Total Achievement score was significantly higher (7 points) than its DAB-2 counterpart. Mean comparisons of WISC-III IQs, WIAT, and DAB-2 scores, respectively, by race and gender found no significant differences on the WISC-III two differences by gender on the WIAT, and one difference by race on the DAB-2. These results question the comparability of the WIAT and the DAB-2 and suggest that for these groups race and gender were relatively unimportant in classifying exceptional students.

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One achievement scale that has proven valuable in the identification and placement process of exceptional students is the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) (Wechsler, 1992). This measure, which was developed and conormed with the WISC-III, is a comprehensive individually administered achievement battery for students in grades K-12 or ages from 5-0 to 19-11. Subtests include Basic Reading, Mathematics Reasoning, Spelling, Reading Comprehension, Numerical Operations, Listening Comprehension, Oral Expression, and Written Expression (Wechsler, 1992). Gentry, Sapp, & Daw (1995) compared subtest scores on the WIAT and the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (K-TEA) for 27 emotionally conflicted adolescents. Correlations between subtests paired for assumed comparability ranged from .79 to .91 (median r =.69), and one of five mean comparisons was significant (Wechsler Mathematics Reasoning > Kaufman Mathematics Applications). The results suggest that these selected Wechsler subtests possess utility for assessing academic achievement and provide an acceptable alternative to the K-TEA.

Correlations between the WIAT and WISC-III scores were found to range from .30 to .70 (Wechsler, 1991; Wechsler, 1992). The mean correlation coefficient between the Reading Comprehension subtest and the WISC-III Full Scale IQ score (r = .71) reflected a strong positive relationship. The Math Reasoning subtest was also found to have a strong correlation with the WISC-III Full Scale IQ score (r = .65) (Wechsler, 1992). Correlations between the WIAT and tests of cognitive ability meet and or exceed the average correlation (r =

.60) that would be expected among strongly correlated instruments (Sattler, 1992).

Another achievement test of potential value in the identification and placement process is the Diagnostic Achievement Battery (DAB-2) (Prasse, 1984; Newcomer, 1990; Naglieri, 1993). Even though it is a multifactor, nationally normed measure, it has received relatively little attention in the literature. The DAB-2 is an individually administered wide-range scale used with students between the ages of 6 to 14 years, 11 months. Its primary purpose is to assess students' academic abilities in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and mathematics. The scale has twelve subtests and provides three main achievement areas (Spoken Language, Written Language, and Mathematics) and five achievement component areas: Listening (Story Comprehension, Characteristics), Speaking (Synonyms, Grammatic Completion), Reading (Alphabet/Word Knowledge, Reading Comprehension), Writing (Capitalization, Punctuation, Spelling, Written Vocabulary), and Applied Mathematics (Mathematics Reasoning, Mathematics Calculation).

The DAB-2 correlated in the moderate to high range when compared with other comprehensive batteries of achievement (Newcomer, 1990; Daub & Colarusso, 1996; Bernier & Hebert, 1995). A comparison of the DAB-2 with the Wide Range Achievement Test revealed a moderate to strong relationship (r = .36 to .78) between like subtests (Newcomer, 1990). Daub and Colarusso (1996) reported a strong positive relationship (r = .71 to .98) between the reading subtests of the DAB-2, Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery, and the Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised. A comparison of the DAB-2 Spelling subtest and the Test of Written Language indicated that the

two overlaped by 65%. Further, the DAB-2 Reading Comprehension subtest and the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) Reading Comprehension subtest shared 16.8% of the variance (Newcomer, 1990).

The DAB-2 also substantially correlated with measures of cognitive ability such as the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude - School Edition, Slosson Intelligence Test, and the Otis Lennon Ability Test (Newcomer, 1990; Bernier & Hebert, 1995). Calculation of shared variance indicated overlaps of 12 to 50% (Newcomer, 1990). Overall the DAB-2 was reported to have adequate support suggesting it is reliable and valid (Bernier & Hebert, 1995; Daub & Colarusso, 1996; Naglieri, 1993).

Since individual achievement tests are increasingly emphasized as key assessment devices in the identification and placement process, it is important to determine the relative utility of these scales. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the criterion validity of the WIAT and the DAB-2 in relation to the WISC-III and compare the relative utility of the achievement scales. Primary questions concerned (a) the relationships among WISC-III IQs, WIAT and DAB-2 scores, (b) similarities and differences between the WIAT and DAB-2 scores, and (c) differences in WISC-III IQs, and WIAT, and DAB-2 achievement scores, respectively, by race and gender.

Method

Subjects were 58 public school students in the southeast who were assessed for exceptional class placement. Most students were assessed because of academic under achievement. Their SES level was middle to working class, 16 were African-American, 42 were Caucasian, and their ages ranged from 6 to 13. They were assessed over a 15-day period by certified

assessment personnel and were administered a standard multifactor battery. Primary instruments included the WISC-III, WIAT, and the DAB-2. In 46 cases the WISC-III was administered first and the WIAT was consistently administered before the DAB-2.

Results

Descriptive data for the WISC-III IQs and WIAT and DAB-2 scores for the total sample are presented in Table 1. The Liffiefor's Test for Normality (SPSS, 1996) was employed indicating the distributions of the scores were normal but had a slightly negative skew (-.11) and were somewhat flat (kurtosis = 1.05) Examination of the WISC-III IQ scales and indexes indicates that with the exception of processing speed all fell two-thirds to almost one standard deviation below the national norm. This outcome was consistent with the level of academic performance of underachievers. Also, the Verbal and Performance IQs were similar with a slight P > V relationship, and the range of scores on all scales was somewhat restricted indicating that group performance was homogeneous. The only WISC-III IQ scale that was close to the average of the norm group was the Processing Speed Index (ξ = 99.04).

Scores on the achievement scales were similar to the WISC-III IQs as most WIAT scores fell within one standard deviation below the mean. Exceptions were the Written Expression Composite (ξ = 81.49) and Writing Composite (ξ = 82.5). The DAB-2 portrayed the students as more at risk for academic failure as they obtained low scores on Grammatic Completion (ξ = 84.28), Alphabet Word Knowledge (ξ = 84), Spelling (ξ = 82.78), and Writing

Composition (ξ = 78.22). These low scores were reflected in the Composite scores of Speaking (ξ = 81.43), Writing (ξ = 81.06), Math (ξ = 83.34), Spoken Language (ξ = 81.43), and Written Language (ξ = 78.68). Total scores differed as the WIAT Total Achievement scores was 87.36 and the DAB-2 Total Achievement scores was 80.5.

Data were further analyzed using Pearson r correlations and t-tests for correlated data. Bonferroni's inequality was used to adjust the alpha level (Kirk, 1982). Examination of Table 2 indicates that the global relationships between ability and achievement fell in the predicted levels as the correlations between the WISC-III Full Scale IQs and WIAT and DAB-2 Total Achievement scores were r = .51, r =.68, respectively. The WIAT and DAB-2 Total Achievement scores also correlated significantly (r = .67).

The relationships between the WISC-III Verbal, Performance, and Full Scale IQs and the WIAT subtest and composite scores ranged from an inverse relationship of r = -.052 for FSIQ versus Oral Expression to r = .604 for PIQ versus Math Reasoning. Fifteen of the 39 correlations between the scales were significant as the median r was .405. Correlations between WISC-III Verbal, Performance and Full Scale IQs and DAB-2 scale and composite scores ranged from a low of r = .00 for Verbal IQ versus Written Language to a r = .66 for FSIQ versus Mathematics. Of the 60 comparisons, just 11 were significant.

As seen in Table 3 correlations between WIAT and DAB-2 Composite scores ranged from r = - .23 for the WIAT Language composite versus the DAB-2 Listening Composite to r = .56 for the two reading composite scores. The

median r = .04. Of the 28 correlations, 12 were negative and just three were significant.

To examine the effects of race and gender on the IQ and achievement scores, mean comparisons of all subscales of the three measures were compared using t-tests for correlated data. Examination of Table 4 indicates the students' scores did not differ by race or gender on any scales of the WISC-III or the WIAT. The only significant difference obtained by race was on the DAB-2 where Caucasian students significantly outscored African-American students on the Capitalization subtest ($t = 3.46$, $p<.01$). It is noteworthy that Caucasian students did tend to score about one third to one half of a standard deviation above African-Americans students on both the IQ and achievement measures.

In regard to gender differences, females scored significantly higher than males on the WIAT Writing Composite ($t = 3.10$, $p < .01$), but the magnitude of the difference was not maintained on the DAB-2 Writing Composite. Another significant difference by gender was found on the WAIT Oral Expression ($t = 4.44$, $p < .01$), but this difference was in favor of males.

Discussion

These outcomes support the well-documented relationship between ability and achievement in that both WIAT and DAB-2 Total Achievement scores correlated moderately with WISC-III Full Scale IQs. However, while these outcomes support the relationships between the global scales, it is important to note that these relationships are substantially reduced when they are examined at the level of subtest and composite scores. These measures appear much more valid when they are considered as general measures of "g".

Attempts to predict achievement in specific areas or subareas received little support.

It is also important to note the similarities and differences between the two achievement measures. Even though the WISC-III and the WIAT were normed on the same population, the WISC-III FSIQs correlated more strongly with the DAB-2 scores. This was an unexpected finding and it is difficult to explain given the range of variability of the correlational relationships between the subtests of the WIAT and the DAB-2, when both are compared to the WISC-III. For example, WISC-III Full Scale IQs share 37.45% and 34.22% of the variance with the Mathematical Reasoning subtest of the WIAT and the DAB-2, respectively. Further, 14.21% and 10.37% of the variances on the respective Reading Comprehension subtests of the two achievement measures is shared with the WISC-III FSIQs.

In regard to the comparative validity of the WIAT and DAB-2, both are multifactor scales that assess a number of concepts related to academic success. However, while the two share 44.89% of the variance there are substantial differences in the ways the two scales will portray students. The WIAT even though it was normed about the same time as the DAB-2, appears to be the easier scale. The students in this study scored about one half of a standard deviation lower on the DAB-2 across the composite scales and subtests. Thus, if one is assessing an exceptional student to determine the presence of an ability-achievement discrepancy using the WISC-III and one of these achievement tests, it is more likely to be found using the DAB-2. The DAB-2 seems to consistently portray students as more at risk and more in need of remediation. One might speculate that since the WIAT was

administered first, the practice effect may have reduced the actual disparity among the achievement test scores.

It is also important to note the lack of significance between scores of African-American and Caucasian students in this study. A similar outcome on cognitive ability scores was obtained elsewhere by the second author and his colleagues (Sapp et al., 1997), but those outcomes were obtained in an urban setting. The students in this study attended a public school in a small city located in a more disadvantaged part of the state. These findings serve to remind the practitioner to pay particular attention to the characteristics presented by students in local settings.

The outcomes in the study suggest that these measures possess validity for use with African-American and Caucasian students. However, it should be noted that these outcomes also suggest that continuing efforts need to be made to strengthen educational opportunities for all students. Even though no significant differences were obtained between racial groups, African-American students were portrayed as being more at risk for academic failure. It is important then, that school psychologists be sensitive to the characteristics of local populations and avoid stereotypical preconceptions regarding expected performance on achievement and ability measures. Hopefully these results are indicators that as educational opportunities are equalized, racial and ethnic discrepancies will tend to be minimized when group comparisons are conducted.

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Table 1 Combined Means and Standard Deviations for WISC-III IQs and Scores on the WIAT and DAB-2 Tests (n = 58)

WISC-III	**M**	**SD**
Full Scale	87.02	9.56
Verbal	86.86	10.87
Performance	89.16	11.63
Verbal Comprehension Index	88.16	11.69
Perceptual Organization Index	89.62	12.10
Freedom from Distractibility Index	89.31	12.19
Processing Speed Index	99.04	13.49
WIAT		
Basic Reading	89.89	10.47
Math Reasoning	91.32	10.75
Spelling	89.85	11.15
Reading Comprehension	86.12	11.18
Numerical Operations	88.68	12.51
Listening Comprehension	92.23	12.88
Oral Expression	97.39	9.09
Written Expression	81.49	10.62
Composites:		
Reading	89.04	10.06
Mathematics	87.84	12.53
Language	93.10	11.10
Writing	82.50	11.25
Total Achievement	87.36	12.30
DAB-2		
Story Comprehension	88.62	10.86
Characteristics	91.63	12.14
Synonyms	85.93	12.88
Grammatic Completion	84.28	13.33
Alphabet Word Knowledge	84.00	13.00
Reading Comprehension	86.52	13.41
Capitalization	87.91	14.19
Punctuation	88.18	10.46
Spelling	82.78	11.31
Writing Composition	78.22	12.42
Math Reasoning	85.71	12.15
Math Calculation	88.66	12.19
Composites:		
Listening	87.15	12.39
Speaking	81.43	11.46
Reading	88.13	12.19
Writing	81.06	10.87
Math	83.34	11.99
Spoken Language	81.43	11.46
Written Language	78.68	11.37
Total Achievement	80.50	11.41

Table 2 WIAT and DAB-2 Pearson r Correlations with WISC-III

	WISC-III		
	Full Scale	Performance Scale	Verbal Scale
WIAT			
Basic Reading	.403	.472*	.21
Math Reasoning	.612*	.604*	.46*
Spelling	.396	.263	.42
Reading Comprehension	.377	.382	.132
Numerical Operations	.522*	.534*	.382
Listening Comprehension	.489*	.509*	.211
Oral Expression	-.052	.021	-.098
Written Expression	.310	.124	.513*
Composites:			
Reading	.419	.49*	.216
Mathematics	.601*	.61*	.44*
Language	.192	.259	.022
Writing	.012	-.088	.095
Total Achievement	.509*	.567*	.283
DAB-2			
Story Comprehension	.318	.236	.249
Characteristics	-.051	-.080	-.026
Synonyms	.084	-.079	.165
Grammatic Completion	.042	.109	-.050
Alphabet Word Knowledge	.299	.197	.291
Reading Comprehension	.322*	.203	.272
Capitalization	.003	-.063	.079
Punctuation	.024	-.082	.093
Spelling	.146	-.011	.120
Writing Composition	.146	.165	.090
Math Reasoning	.585*	.333*	.583*
Math Calculation Composit	.239	.114	.187
Listening	.16	.05	.16
Speaking	-.195	-.28	-.10
Reading	.48*	.27	.48
Writing	.04	.11	-.07
Math	.66*	.42*	.64
Spoken Language	.03	.01	-.04
Written Language	.10	.08	.00
Total Achievement	.68*	.396*	.73**

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 3 Pearson r Correlations for WIAT and DAB-2 Scores

	WIAT				
	Reading	Mathematics	Language	Writing	Total Achievement
DAB-2					
Story Comprehension	.02	.04	.13	-.02	.34*
Characteristics	-.12	.19	.20	.34	-.21
Synonyms	-.03	-.05	-.05	-.30	-.11
Grammatic Completion	.17	-.03	.09	-.05	-.02
Alphabet Word Knowledge	.32	.36**	.07	.20	.42*
Reading Comprehension	.24	.38**	.02	-.04	.38*
Capitalization	-.10	-.06	-.03	-.15	-.06
Punctuation	-.19	-.15	.06	-.08	-.17
Spelling	.16	.26	.04	-.05	.17
Writing Composition	.29	.11	-.03	.01	.15
Math Reasoning	.08	.18	.24	.08	.21
Math Calculation	.25	.24	.04	.12	.29*
Composites:					
Listening	.02	.19	-.23	.07	.11
Speaking	-.15	-.16	.06	-.01	-.20
Reading	.48**	.40**	.02	-.17	.30
Writing	-.19	-.10	.00	-.08	-.19
Math	.24	.56**	.09	.06	.35*
Spoken Language	.11	.28	-.27	.11	.23
Written Language	-.04	-.17	.04	-.08	-.10
Total Achievement	.06	.30	-.03	-.00	.67**

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 4 Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values for WISC-III IQs, WIAT and DAB-2 Scores

	RACE			GENDER		
WISC-III	African-American	t-value	Caucasian	Male	t-value	Female
Full Scale	82.26	-2.445	89.28	87.75	.700	85.68
Verbal	82.06	-2.250	89.51	88.50	.600	87.43
Performance	85.66	-1.709	91.43	88.12	.663	90.29
Verbal Comprehension Index	81.08	-2.856	91.52	88.64	-.469	87.00
Perceptual Organization Index	84.54	-1.811	91.66	90.41	-.755	87.69
Freedom from Distractibility Index	89.54	.181	88.84	90.03	-.687	87.47
Processing Speed Index	101.33	-.094	101.68	99.68	-.268	100.69
WIAT						
Basic Reading	84.40	-2.40	92.52	88.44	-1.504	93.19
Math Reasoning	86.80	-2.247	93.75	91.36	.227	90.50
Spelling	86.40	-1.413	91.03	87.75	-2.066	94.31
Reading Comprehension	86.46	-1.59	91.02	87.33	-1.427	92.06
Numerical Operations	86.27	-1.263	90.78	84.77	-1.557	91.81
Listening Comprehension	87.80	-2.016	95.62	92.16	.209	91.38
Oral Expression	79.33	-1.848	86.47	96.77	4.443**	80.73
Written Expression	79.33	-1.848	86.47	82.63	-1.496	88.20

Composites:						
Reading	82.06	-1.987	88.50	85.64	-.759	88.31
Mathematics	84.40	-1.879	91.25	87.23	-.671	89.81
Language	93.00	-.563	95.08	94.56	.674	92.18
Writing	79.31	-1.218	84.00	77.04	-3.012**	90.09
Total Achievement	82.13	-2.33	90.44	86.60	-.227	87.40
DAB-2						
Story Comprehension	83.57	-1.674	89.69	88.02	.922	84.62
Characteristics	84.64	-2.620	94.38	91.54	.191	90.77
Synonyms	82.86	-1.084	87.34	86.28	.123	85.77
Grammatic Completion	76.78	-.768	79.38	78.72	.305	77.69
Alphabet Word Knowledge	85.36	-.640	88.03	85.72	-1.026	90.00
Reading Comprehension	84.07	-1.682	90.76	87.33	-.381	88.85
Capitalization	80.38	-3.460**	94.50	86.00	-1.668	93.75
Punctuation	93.75	-2.265	86.13	86.13	-2.265	93.75
Spelling	81.07	.077	80.80	83.26	.462	80.83
Writing Composition	80.36	-.921	83.97	82.33	.980	78.75
Math Reasoning	82.54	1.087	86.74	86.74	-1.131	88.53
Math Calculation	82.50	-2.746	92.21	87.56	.363	85.71
Composites:						
Listening	80.93	-1.313	87.80	88.49	1.438	83.20
Speaking	75.57	-1.451	80.80	78.70	.198	78.00
Reading	82.20	-1.203	87.03	84.11	-.466	86.00
Writing	80.36	-.611	82.83	78.56	-1.434	83.47
Math	82.07	-1.331	87.23	84.39	.237	83.50

Spoken Language	76.57	-2.331	84.62	81.88	.325	80.73
Written Language	77.57	-2.033	84.56	80.03	-1.431	84.93
Total Achievement	76.40	-1.909	82.96	79.26	.815	81.71

** $p < .01$

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